

Tree Committee and Tree Ordinance Board Presentation
Chevy Chase Village Annual Meeting
April 21, 2014

The Tree Committee focuses chiefly on Village owned trees. There are six active members - Nina Bangjensen, Larry Heilman, Ralph Stephens, Tina and Tom Schendt and myself . The Tree Ordinance Board, which was established in 2012, is concerned solely with proposed take downs of mature, healthy trees on private property. It is a three person Board, composed currently of myself, Bliss Ryan, and Nina Bangjensen

Like the Environment Committee, the objective of both the Tree Committee and Tree Ordinance Board is to keep the Village green by nurturing the Village tree canopy. A recent aerial survey by Montgomery County indicates that our present tree canopy embraces roughly 66% of the Village footprint. This is good - indeed slightly better than our neighboring jurisdictions. We'd like to see it even better.

To this end, in 2012 the Village Board initiated a special program to plant 90 trees per year in its parks and rights-of-way with the goal of having fully planted streetscapes along all Village streets within five years. The program was expanded last year to include a special project to reforest the Connecticut Avenue right of way.

We are well along in both programs. State approval was obtained last year to plant up to 102 trees in the Village's portion of the Connecticut Avenue right-of-way. Twenty-one of these trees are now in place and a further ten are to be planted later this month. With Village encouragement, the Chevy Chase Club has also installed seventeen trees in the right-of-way in front of its property.

Additionally during 2013, the Village planted 65 trees along its local streets and four in the buffer. Only eight Village trees had to be removed, so in total we have a net gain of 82 trees.

We will be planting 35 more right-of-way trees this spring and anticipate continuing this program until all viable sites along Village right-of-ways and Connecticut Avenue have been filled. To date, we have located trees only on sites that adjacent property owners have also believed appropriate for planting, since there have been more such sites than trees. There will come time, however, when to fulfill the goal of a fully planted streetscape, the Village will need to use sites which adjacent property owners would prefer be left unplanted. So then there will be need to be a balancing of public good and private interest and some process to achieve this balance in specific instances.

The Tree Ordinance Board was set up by the Village Board to reconcile public good and private interest in reference to proposed takedowns of mature privately owned trees. The Village Tree Ordinance regulates such takedowns. The Village Manager can issue permits to remove trees found to be hazardous or diseased but the Ordinance requires Board approval of other removals. This had proved cumbersome and expensive and beginning two years ago such appeals first are referred to the Tree Ordinance Board. Most proposed removals - indeed 66 during this past year - have been for trees found by the Village arborist to be diseased or

hazardous, but five cases were referred to the Tree Ordinance Board. In four of these five cases a re-landscaping plan was developed which the TOB considered provided for appropriate restoration of the canopy that would be lost as a result of the requested removal. The fifth appeal was withdrawn by the owner after the Tree Ordinance Board had concluded it was an unusually valuable specimen that should not be removed.

In all, I believe the Tree Ordinance Board process has proved to be effective and preferable to prior arrangements which required all tree appeals to be heard by the Village Board. I believe we also are making good progress in restoring Village streetscapes.

There may be further steps that might be taken to help residents properly maintain their canopy trees, and the Tree Committee will be meeting next week to review some interesting programs which have been adopted by our neighboring jurisdictions to this purpose. For the moment I will say only that we appreciate how much all of us benefit from the priority which the very large majority of our residents give to planting and maintaining their trees as well as the flowers and shrubs which make Chevy Chase such a beautiful neighborhood at this time of year - and to remind you all to cut back vines which may be growing into your trees and not to allow you landscapers to mulch around their trunks.

Thank you and stay tuned.

*Submitted by:
Samuel Lawrence, Chair
Village Tree Committee and Tree Ordinance Board*